

# Ranger Rick's nature magazine

October 1979

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THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION





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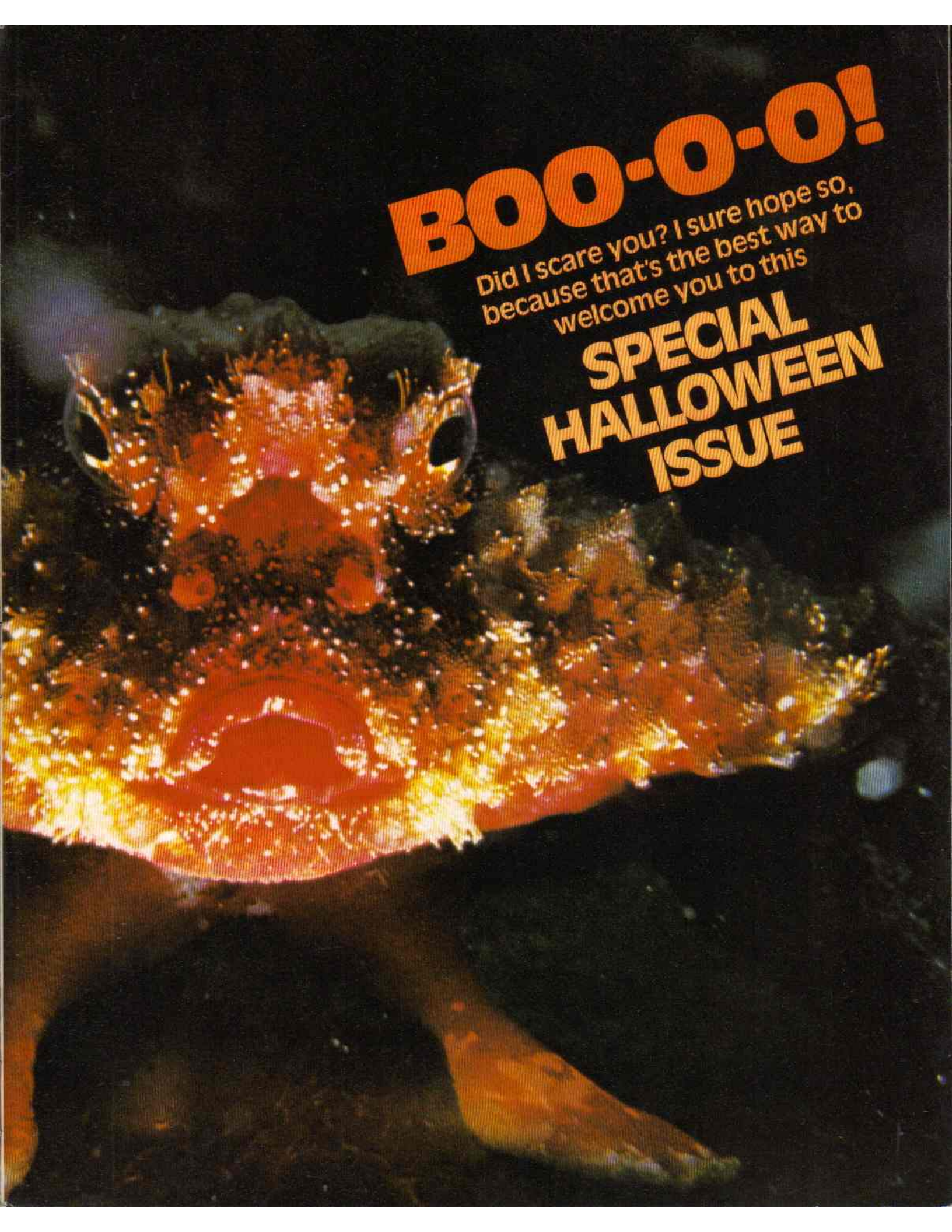
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October 1979 Volume 13, Number 10

- 3 Boo-o-o Batfish
- 5 Ranger Rick & His Friends
- 9 Scary Skulls
- 10 Spider and Bat Craft
- 12 Sky Dancer
- 16 The Black Widow
- 19 Monarchs on Parade
- 24 Underwater Mini-Monsters
- 28 Talk to the Owls
- 33 The Firebird
- 36 Nature Club News
- 38 Wise Old Owl
- 39 Sneak a Peek at Mini-Monsters
- 40 Halloween, Halloween—Poem
- 42 Pumpkin People

Cover Credits: Front—Orbweaver Spider by Anthony Mercieca; Back—Golden Lion Marmoset by Gary Milburn / Tom Slack & Assoc.




A person is wearing a costume that appears to be made of a glowing, textured material, possibly a mask or a suit. The costume has large, dark, circular eyes and a wide, open mouth. The person is standing against a dark background.

**BOO-O-O!**

Did I scare you? I sure hope so,  
because that's the best way to  
welcome you to this

**SPECIAL  
HALLOWEEN  
ISSUE**





**W**hen you looked at my picture on the opening page you might have thought I was wearing a Halloween mask. But that was my face, with a bright light shining under it. (You can make your face look super-scary too. In the dark just hold a flashlight under your chin.)

When I stand on my leglike fins, I look like a monster from another world. When I swim with my winglike fins, I look like a bat taking flying lessons. Add all the freckles on my face, and no wonder that my name is: *polka-dot batfish*.

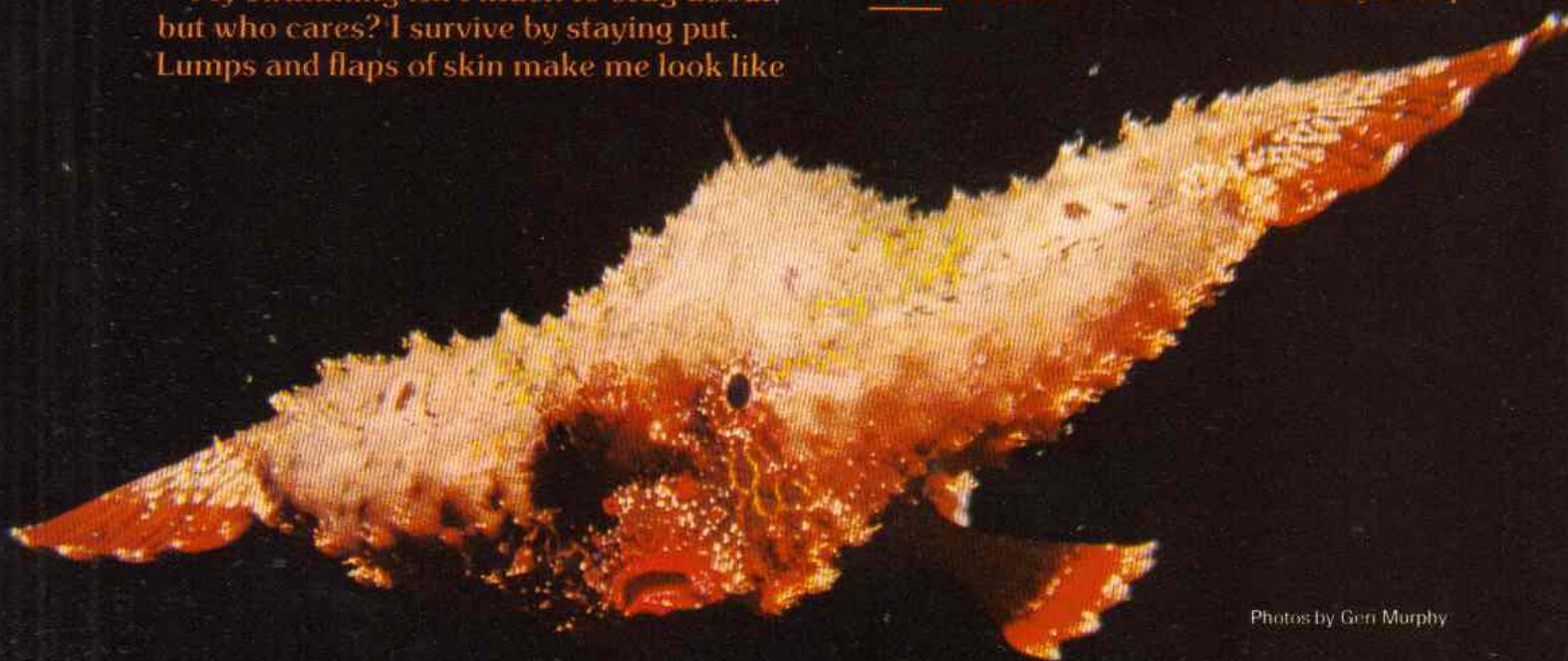
My swimming isn't much to brag about, but who cares? I survive by staying put. Lumps and flaps of skin make me look like

the rocks and seaweed nearby. If you look hard you may find me anywhere along the coast from North Carolina to Brazil, just hiding and waiting.

Waiting for what? Prey! When a smaller fish comes along I try to make it come closer. From a hole between my eyes I poke out a long spine — my fishing pole! Back and forth, back and forth I wave it. A bit of muscle on the end is my lure. It wiggles like a worm. When the small fish is close enough — **SNAP!** — I swallow it.

I guess you could call that **TRICK AND TREAT!**

— Gerry Bishop



Photos by Geri Murphy



by Bonnie Bisbee

"Wow, there sure are a lot of big trees here!" said Sammy Squirrel as he, Becky Hare and Ranger Rick trotted along a forest trail. Tall cedar, spruce and hemlock trees towered over them. The animals were in the Pacific Northwest to visit some of Rick's cousins. He hadn't seen them in a long time and was eager to catch up on their news.

"I wonder if we'll see a Bigfoot," muttered Rick.

"Bigfoot!" shouted Sammy. "Are we in Bigfoot country?"

"We sure are, Sammy," said Rick. "All the stories I've heard about them say they've been seen around here."

"They're supposed to be giant, hairy, apelike creatures," said Sammy. "A squirrel wouldn't stand much chance against one of them."

"I've heard they smell terrible," said Becky, her nose twitching as she looked around nervously.

Rick laughed. "Just keep walking, you two, and watch for a good place to spend the night. We'll find my cousins in the morning."

Becky hopped along, cocking her ears to catch any sound of danger. Suddenly a loud scream filled the air.

"What's that?" cried Becky.

"I don't know," said Rick, shaken by the noise. He looked around. "Where's Sammy?" he said. Just then they heard another scream.

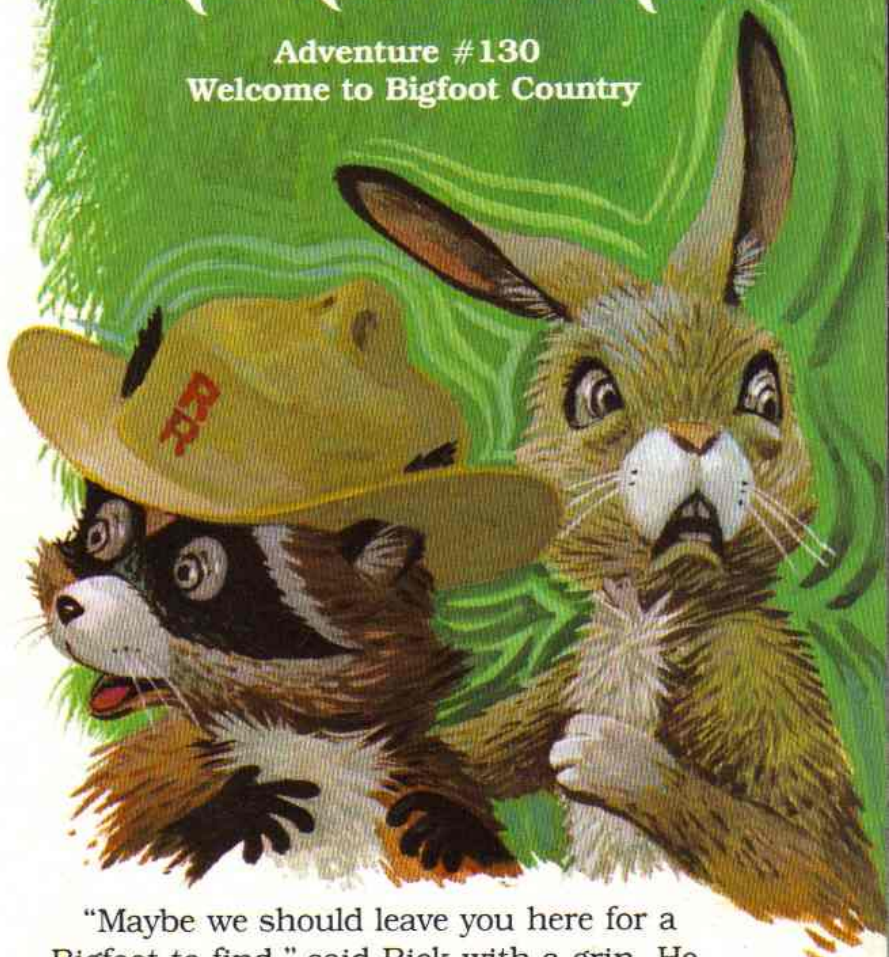
"A Bigfoot!" wailed Becky. "I know it!"

"It is *not* a Bigfoot! It's me — Sammy. I'm stuck. Come help me!"

Sammy had been so busy looking for a Bigfoot he hadn't seen the hole next to a giant spruce tree. His paw was firmly caught in a tangle of roots.

# Ranger Rick and his friends

Adventure #130  
Welcome to Bigfoot Country



"Maybe we should leave you here for a Bigfoot to find," said Rick with a grin. He reached down and freed Sammy's paw.

"Come on, squirrel, it's bedtime."

"Speaking of Bigfoot," said Becky, "maybe there isn't any such creature. No one has ever proved it."

"No one has proved there *aren't* any Bigfoots, either!" said Sammy. "I've heard that when they're mad they break big trees in two and throw rocks at things that get in their way. Me, I think Bigfoot just *might* exist." He looked around the darkening, silent forest. It could hold some strange secrets.

*Please turn the page*



"Forget it, Sammy," said Rick. "Let's bed down in this clearing."

Sammy stretched out on a bed of moss. He thought about climbing a tree for safety, but he wanted to sleep near his friends. He curled his tail over his head and closed his eyes. But his mind kept returning to the same question: *Is there really a Big foot?* Finally the little squirrel drifted off to sleep.

Suddenly a long, terrible yell seemed to split the air. Sammy thought it was the most awful sound he'd ever heard. Again and again the yell came, each time dying away in a trembling moan.

The fur on Sammy's back and neck stood up. He started to shake. He'd never heard anything like that before! Finally the yelling stopped. Sammy could hear shuffling in the dry leaves very near his mossy bed. He smelled a terrible odor that was getting worse.

Sammy knew he could easily be seen in the moonlight. He wanted to run but he was paralyzed with fear. The shuffling steps came nearer and the smell got stronger! Sammy saw a huge, dark, shaggy form standing right over him!

The big creature began to growl low in its throat. Sammy tried to curl into an invisible ball. He expected to be grabbed and eaten any second. *If only he could run.*





After a few dazed seconds, Sammy realized that the creature was talking to him! Its voice was deep and rumbling, but it sounded friendly. "Howdy, there, little fella," it said. "Aren't you new around here?"

"I'm just passing through," Sammy managed to answer. Then he sat up for a better look at his new "friend."

The creature was at least eight feet tall! On top of its huge square shoulders was a big head with an ape-like face. It had a small nose, a wide mouth and intelligent dark eyes. It looked almost as if it were smiling.

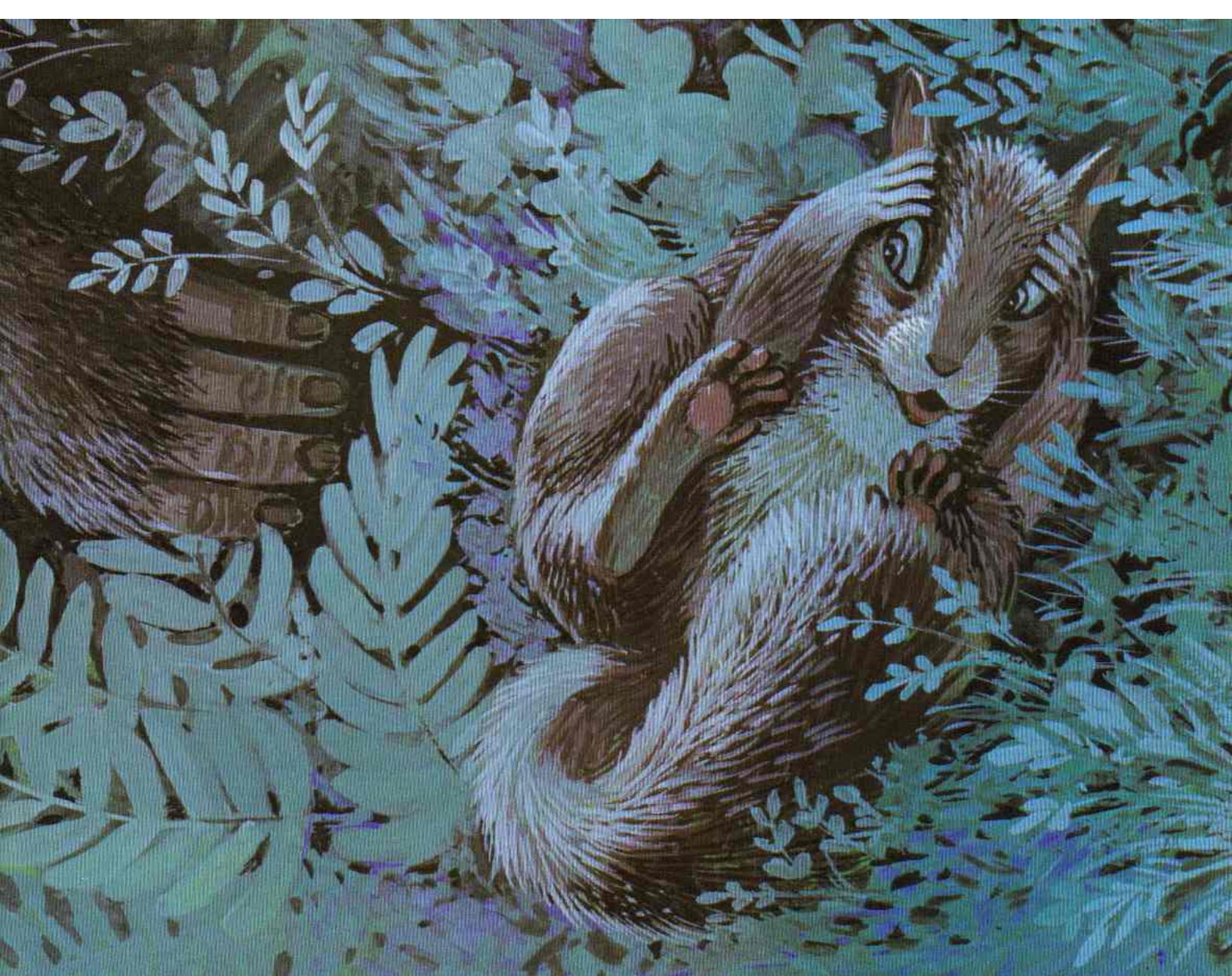
Sammy no longer felt afraid. He was even getting used to the terrible odor. "You're a Bigfoot, aren't you?" he said.

The huge hairy body shook as the creature chuckled. "Well, I'm sure not a 'littlefoot,' now am I?" It held up one of its enormous feet. To Sammy it looked like an overgrown human foot. "You're right, little fella. Barney Bigfoot's the name. What's yours?"

Sammy told him. Then he added, "I wasn't sure that you really existed. But say, is it true you break trees in two when you're angry?"

"Heck, no. I wouldn't do that even if I could," Barney assured him. "A Bigfoot loves trees. The Indians in this area call us 'Guardians of the Forest' and we are, for sure! We're peace-loving folks and we keep to ourselves."

*Please turn the page*





"What kind of animal are you, Barney?" Sammy asked next.

"Now that's a tough one, Sammy," Barney said. "I guess we could be a kind of giant ape, or even an ancient form of human that never died out. Whatever we are, I'm a sight worried that we *will* die out soon if people start cutting down our forests."

"I don't think most people would want that!" Sammy told him. "They have too much fun telling scary stories about you. And boy, they'd sure be scared if they'd heard you yelling a while ago!"

"*Yelling!*" roared Barney. "It just so happens I'm famous around these parts for my fine singing voice. I wasn't yelling, Sammy. I was *singing* — just a little song to myself about how gosh-golly pretty the forest looks shining in the moonlight. It goes like this." Barney closed his eyes, opened his mouth and began his song. No matter what he said, to Sammy it still sounded like yelling.

The noise shook Sammy and seemed to rock him back and forth. Then the sounds faded. When Sammy opened his eyes, early morning sunlight was shining

down through the tall trees. Becky was shaking him.

"Why were you moaning, Sammy? Did you have a bad dream?" she asked.

"No, I just met a new friend, Barney Bigfoot. Didn't you hear him singing?" Sammy asked as he sat up and rubbed his eyes.

"We didn't hear a thing," said Rick. "You must have had a bad dream about a monster."

"Barney Bigfoot is no monster!" exclaimed Sammy. "I like him. And I hope people protect the forest where he and lots of other animals live!"

Becky and Rick just looked at each other and shook their heads.

"I think we'd better eat something and get moving," said Becky. "Your cousins will be waiting, Rick."

"The first thing I'm going to ask your cousins, Rick, is whether they've seen a Bigfoot," said Sammy, trotting around in circles.

"Good grief, Sammy," said Rick. "What are you looking for?"

"Footprints," said Sammy. "Just some great big old footprints!" *The End*

Drawings by Lorin Thompson



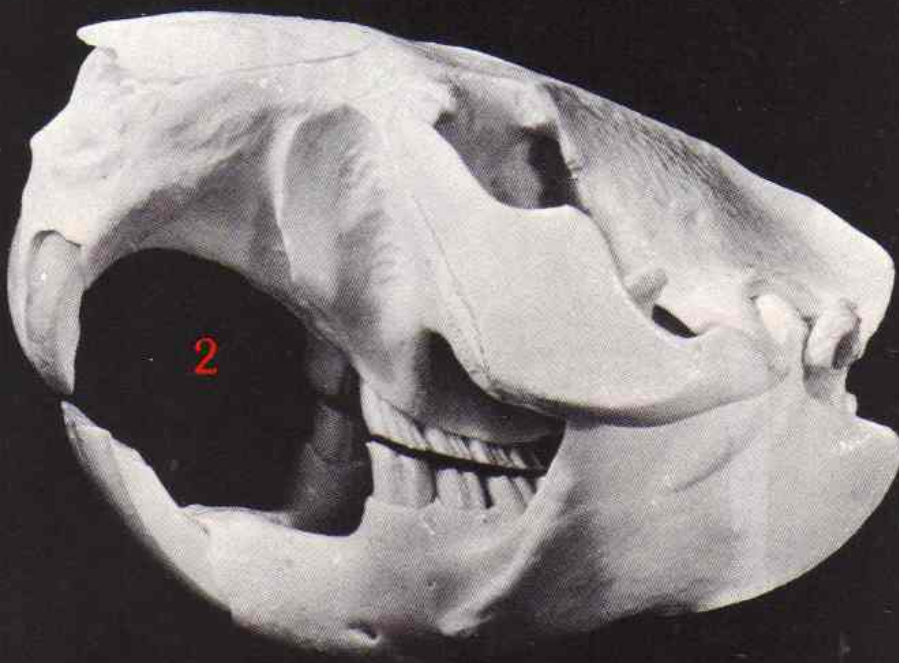
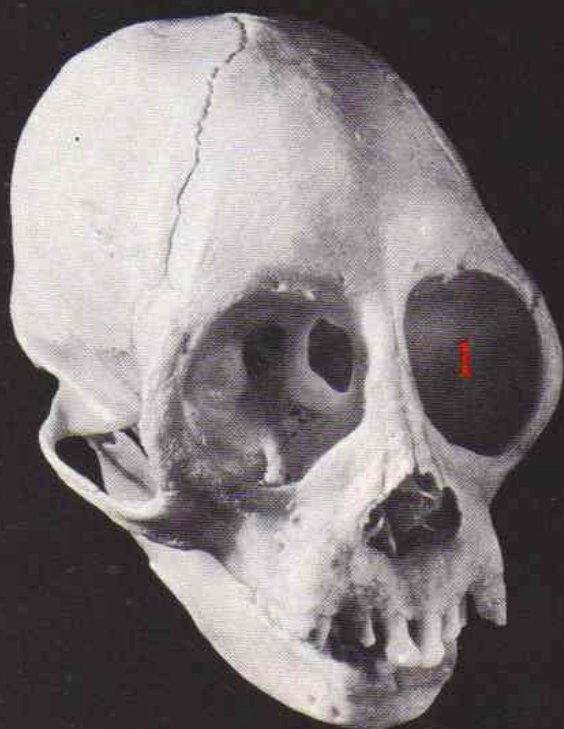
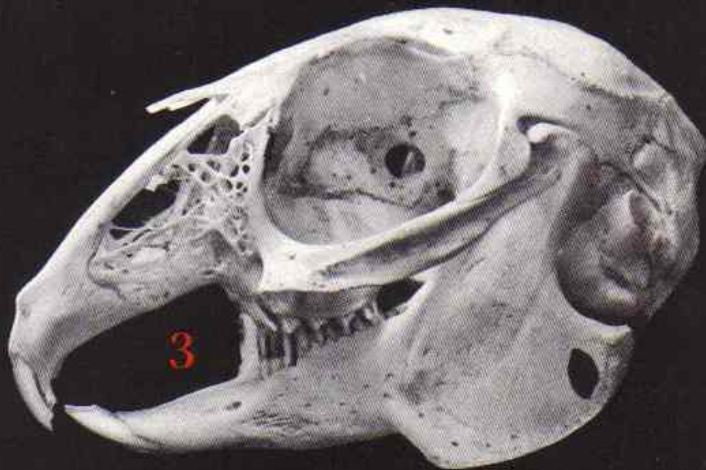


What better time to hunt  
for skulls than Halloween?  
Can you find the right skull  
for each of these animals?

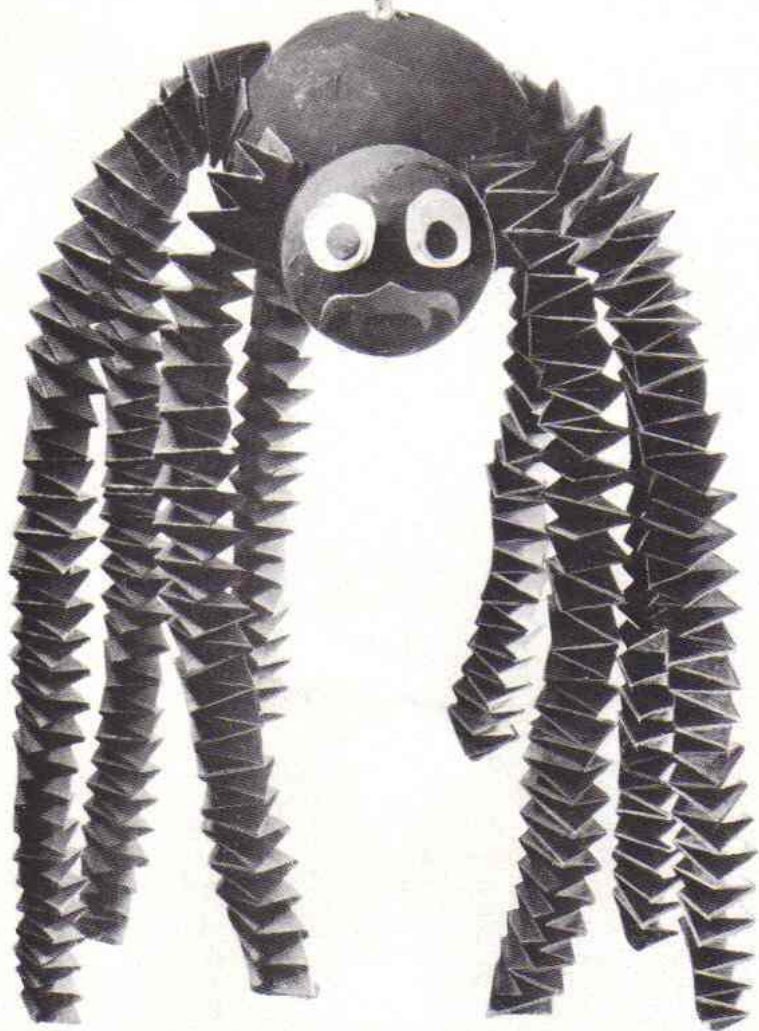
**MONKEY**  
**RABBIT**  
**BEAVER**  
**BOBCCAT**

*Answers on page 38*

# SCARY SKULLS





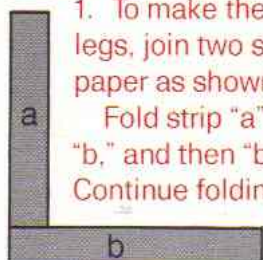


# SPOOKY SPIDER

**You will need:** 32 strips of black paper, 1/2" wide; black paint; glue; string, 15" long; two foam balls, one 2 1/2" and one 1 1/2" across; scraps of paper; paste; scissors.

1. To make the spider's legs, join two strips of paper as shown.

Fold strip "a" over strip "b," and then "b" over "a." Continue folding one strip



over the other until both have been used up. Glue ends together. Make 15 more paper "springs." Glue two springs end to end for each leg.

2. Cover the balls with paste and paper. When they are dry paint them black. Glue the two balls together.

3. Cut out eyes and mouth. Glue them to the spider's head. Attach the legs and the string to the body.

# GOING BATTY

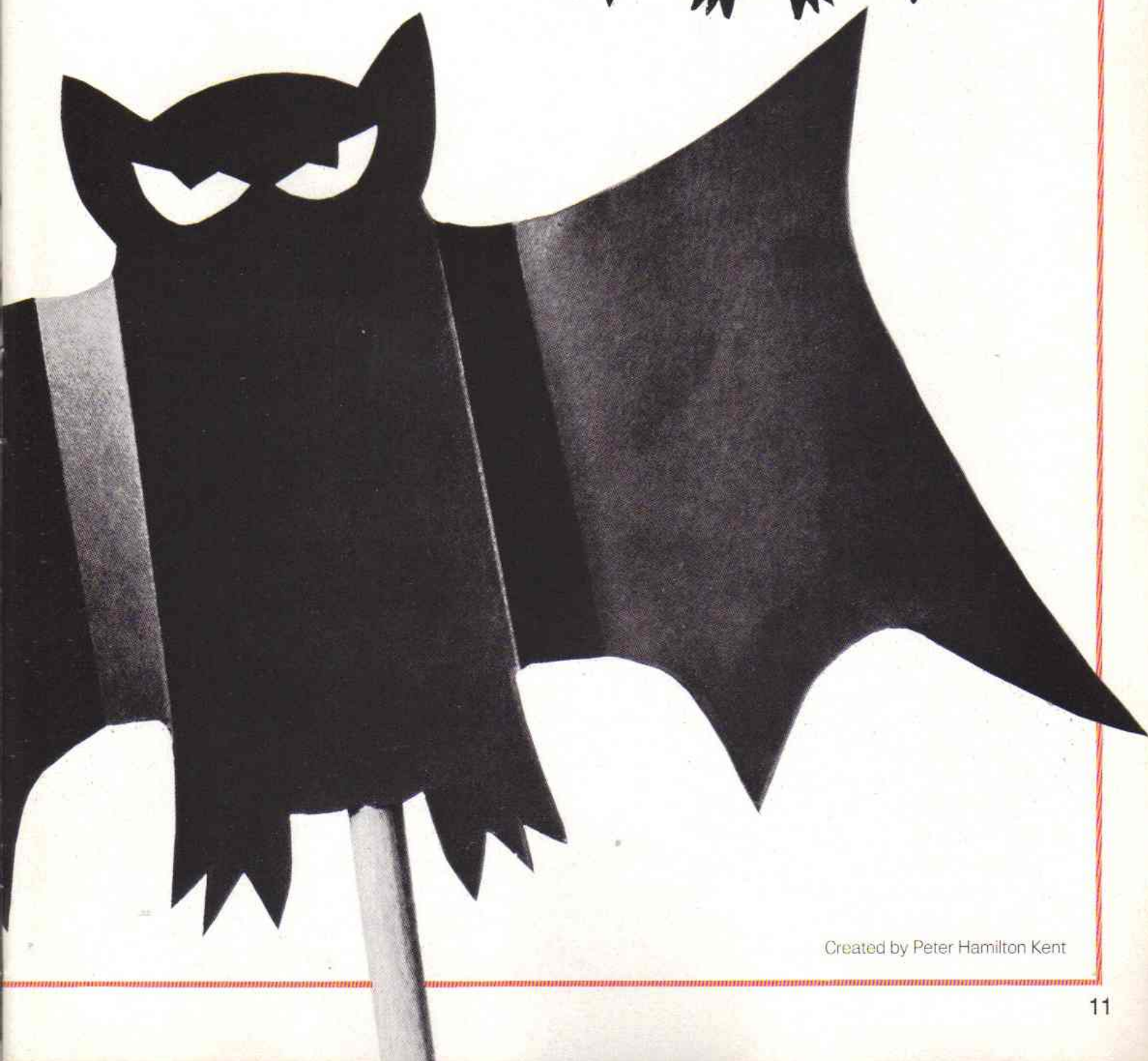
All your friends will go batty when you scare them with this bat stick puppet. To make it **you will need:** medium-weight black paper (or use white paper and color or paint it black); a small piece of white paper; scissors; glue; a dowel, straight stick or chopstick.





Cut out a bat shape from the black paper. Cut out two white eyes and glue them in place. Fold the bat's wings as shown in the drawing.

Glue the dowel down the center of the bat's back. When the glue is set, hold the stick and gently wave it up and down to make the bat "fly."



Created by Peter Hamilton Kent





# Sky Dancer

**S** by Ann Saling  
KY DANCER was born in the middle of June in an old farm shed. Like all little brown bats, he came feet first from his mother's body. Dusky, his mother, hung from her toes and thumb claws. She caught him in a cradle of skin between her legs and tail. Sky Dancer felt the cool air of his new world.

Sky Dancer looked like the hundreds of other baby bats being born in the shed. He was nearly hairless and about an inch (2.5 cm) long. His eyes were closed tight with his mouselike ears folded over them. His wings were crumpled and weak.

Dusky gently licked her baby clean. Then, using teeth, thumbs and toes, Sky Dancer climbed across his mother's furry belly. Quickly he found one of the two nipples high on Dusky's chest. With his curved milk teeth he held tightly to the

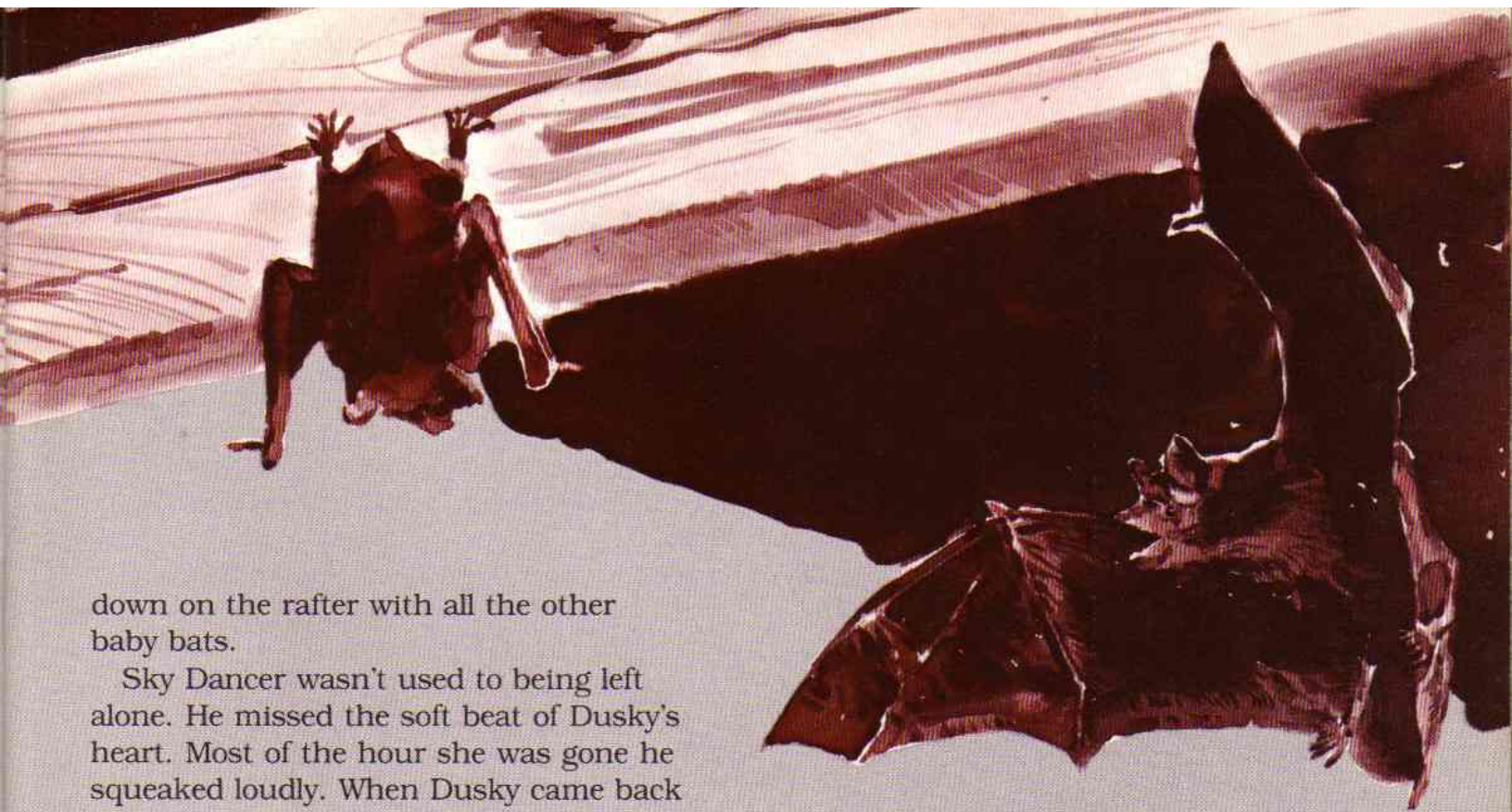
nipple. With his toes and thumbs he gripped her soft fur. Her thin, leathery wings covered him. Though he was naked and helpless, he felt warm and safe.

Soon Dusky let go of the rafter with her thumb claws. She now hung only by her toes — which is right side up for a bat! She began to clean herself carefully. Sky Dancer kept filling his stomach with warm milk.

As her baby nursed, Dusky fell asleep. Her body temperature dropped to the temperature of the air. Her breathing and heartbeat slowed. In this way she and the other mother bats saved energy.

Early in the evening Dusky woke up. She shook all over to raise her temperature. Her breathing and heartbeat returned to normal. Shortly after sunset she parked Sky Dancer on a rafter and flew out of the shed. While Dusky dashed and dived catching insects, Sky Dancer stayed inside and rested. He hung head





down on the rafter with all the other baby bats.

Sky Dancer wasn't used to being left alone. He missed the soft beat of Dusky's heart. Most of the hour she was gone he squeaked loudly. When Dusky came back to nurse him, he eagerly crawled onto her furry body.

The next day Sky Dancer's world brightened. His tiny eyes opened for the first time. He could not see very well, but he had little need to see as he nestled in Dusky's warm fur.

After several evenings, Sky Dancer began to play with the other baby bats. They crawled over and under one another, chasing, play-fighting, pretending to bite. When the mothers returned, the baby bats tried to crawl onto the first one to land nearby. But each mother nuzzled and licked faces until she found her own baby.

Late one afternoon, when Sky Dancer was nearly one week old, his ears finally straightened up. Now his world was full of sounds! The squeaks, chirps, twitters and whirring of wings startled him. But Sky Dancer listened and learned. For the first time he clearly heard his own voice and his mother's answer.

After Dusky left that evening, Sky Dancer added his voice to those of the

other young bats. Together they sounded like two hundred doors squeaking on their hinges, opening and closing, opening and closing.

Now that he could hear better, Sky Dancer knew at once when Dusky came home. There was a whooshing of wings, a squealing of babies, a chirping of mothers. Sky Dancer was so excited and hungry when he met his mother that he almost knocked her off the rafter.

Every day Sky Dancer's fur grew thicker and darker. Now after nursing he took care of, or *groomed*, his fur and wings. He hung by his toes and held his head up. With his tongue he licked every part of his body within reach. Then he wet his thumb claws in his mouth. Like a cat using its wet paw, he cleaned his head, ears and nose. Hanging by one foot, he quickly raked his toe claws through his fur. Dusky helped him clean the parts he couldn't reach.

Sky Dancer was beginning to fan and flap his wings while he played. Some of

*Please turn the page*



the other young bats were already making short flights inside the shed. But Sky Dancer wasn't quite ready.

One afternoon when he was almost three weeks old, Sky Dancer woke up. He yawned, stretched and moved his wings. His heartbeat and breathing increased. Ready at last, he lifted his head, pushed away from the wall with his wrists and released his toe claws.

Sky Dancer dropped toward the floor, but then spread out his wings. At once they broke his fall. Quickly he flapped them up and down. How far they spread out — four times the length of his body!

The young bat flew only a short time and then landed against a wall. After a short rest he was in the air again.

For a week Sky Dancer flew only inside the shed. Every flight taught him something new. After each flight, he folded his wings like an umbrella.

Slowly his squeaking changed to sounds so high no human ear could hear them. Sky Dancer learned to *echolocate* (EK-o-LO-kate). He listened for the faint echoes of his cries as they bounced off the shed walls, floor and roof. Each echo sounded different. He could even tell which echoes bounced off the other bats.

Dusky was still a big part of Sky Dancer's world. He nursed twice a day and snuggled next to her. He was nearly

Drawings by Ted Lewin





fully grown. He learned to make new sounds as he "talked" to his mother.

In the middle of July, Sky Dancer entered the outside world for the first time. He didn't know why Dusky flew out each evening, but this time he followed.

Right away something terrifying happened — an owl was waiting in a tree near the shed. It swooped down and caught another young bat before it had picked up speed. Sky Dancer, flying behind Dusky, heard it squeal. He stayed as close to his mother as he could.

The darkening sky looked huge to Sky Dancer. There was no roof to it at all! To guide himself in the dark he followed Dusky's cries. She flew first to a small lake where the bats usually drank. There she skimmed the water, dipping the tip of her tongue in again and again. Sky Dancer tried to follow, but he landed in a tree near the lake. He squeaked his *I'm lost* cry.

Dusky quickly recognized his voice and flew to him. Sky Dancer launched into the air at once, following her again. But soon he flew back to the tree. Dusky was diving and zigzagging so fast, he could

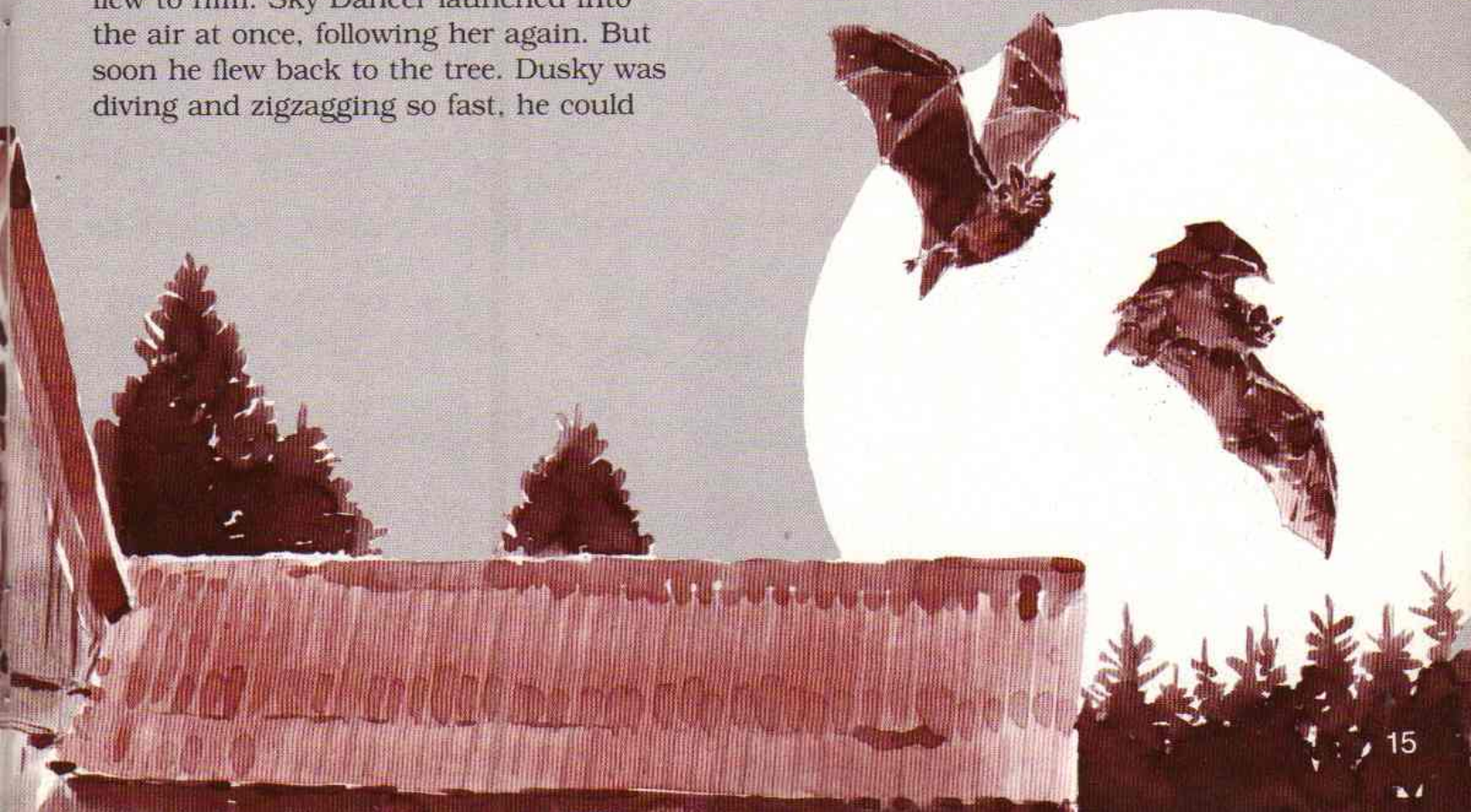
not keep up. He did not know she was chasing insects, catching mosquitoes and mayflies — filling her stomach.

At last Dusky came to Sky Dancer. He followed her back home, tired and hungry. In the shed he crawled close to her and nursed. Flying was hard work!

Soon Sky Dancer learned to catch insects too. He scooped them up with his tail skin. Then he reached down, bit them with his small, sharp teeth and swallowed them. Or he just flipped them into his mouth with his wing tips. He practiced his echolocation. He used echoes of his voice to find his way around and to find the food he liked. Soon he was able to catch over a thousand insects each night!

Thanks to the good care his mother had given him, Sky Dancer was ready to live on his own.

*The End*





# The Black Widow

by Isabel West

Black and shiny, Natasha the black widow spider looms over her mate. Courting Natasha is dangerous business. Her mate is less than half her size, and his bite is less poisonous. If Natasha doesn't like him, she may eat him up! This is why she is called black "widow."

Carefully the male approaches Natasha's web. He taps a kind of Morse code on its threads to find out if she is ready for him. If she is not ready, she may turn on him in a fit of black widow anger. Or

she may mate with him and eat him later.

Natasha's web is often hidden. Black widows live under stones, in holes in the ground, around tree stumps, in log piles, garages or basements and in many other places good for catching insects.

The black widow likes warm weather. You may find spiders like Natasha in all parts of the United States, but they are most common in the South. They also live in other warm parts of the world. You can usually recognize the female black widow by the tiny red or yellow patch on her abdomen (AB-doh-mun). The red patch is often shaped like an hourglass.

If you see her, be careful. Her bite can be very harmful to humans. Luckily, though, Natasha would much rather avoid people than bite them. Even when disturbed in her web, usually she will try to

escape rather than attack.

Natasha can spin at least three different kinds of silk thread. One kind she uses to tie up her victims, another to line her nest and a third to weave her web. The thread she uses for the web is very strong.

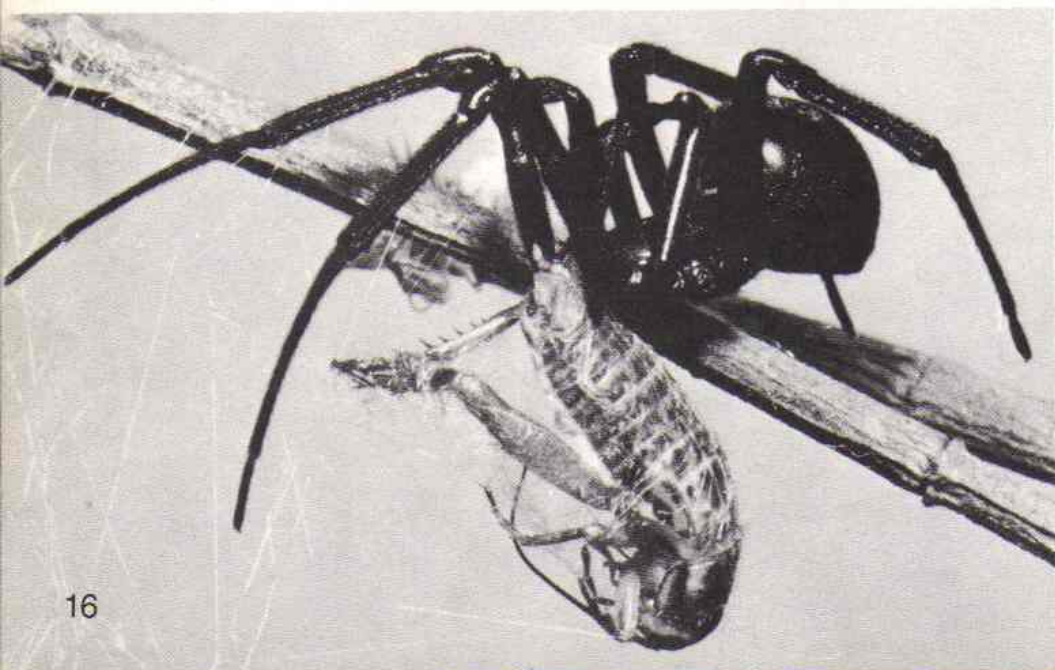
When Natasha is ready for dinner, she retreats to a corner of her web. There she waits for her victims — ready to pounce at a moment's notice.

What's this? An unsuspecting grasshopper is trapped in her web. Round and round it thrashes, caught in the sticky threads. Its struggles alert Natasha. She rushes to her prey. Quickly she wraps it in silk. The grasshopper cannot move. Swiftly she bites it with two tiny fangs that deliver a powerful poison. Within minutes the battle is over.

As spiders go, Natasha is not a tidy weaver. Her web is a tangled mess that looks as if she had better things to do than keep house! You can sometimes find the dry remains of a meal in her web.

Natasha rarely leaves her silken home. Between meals she cleans herself, fixes her web and rests. *Please turn the page*

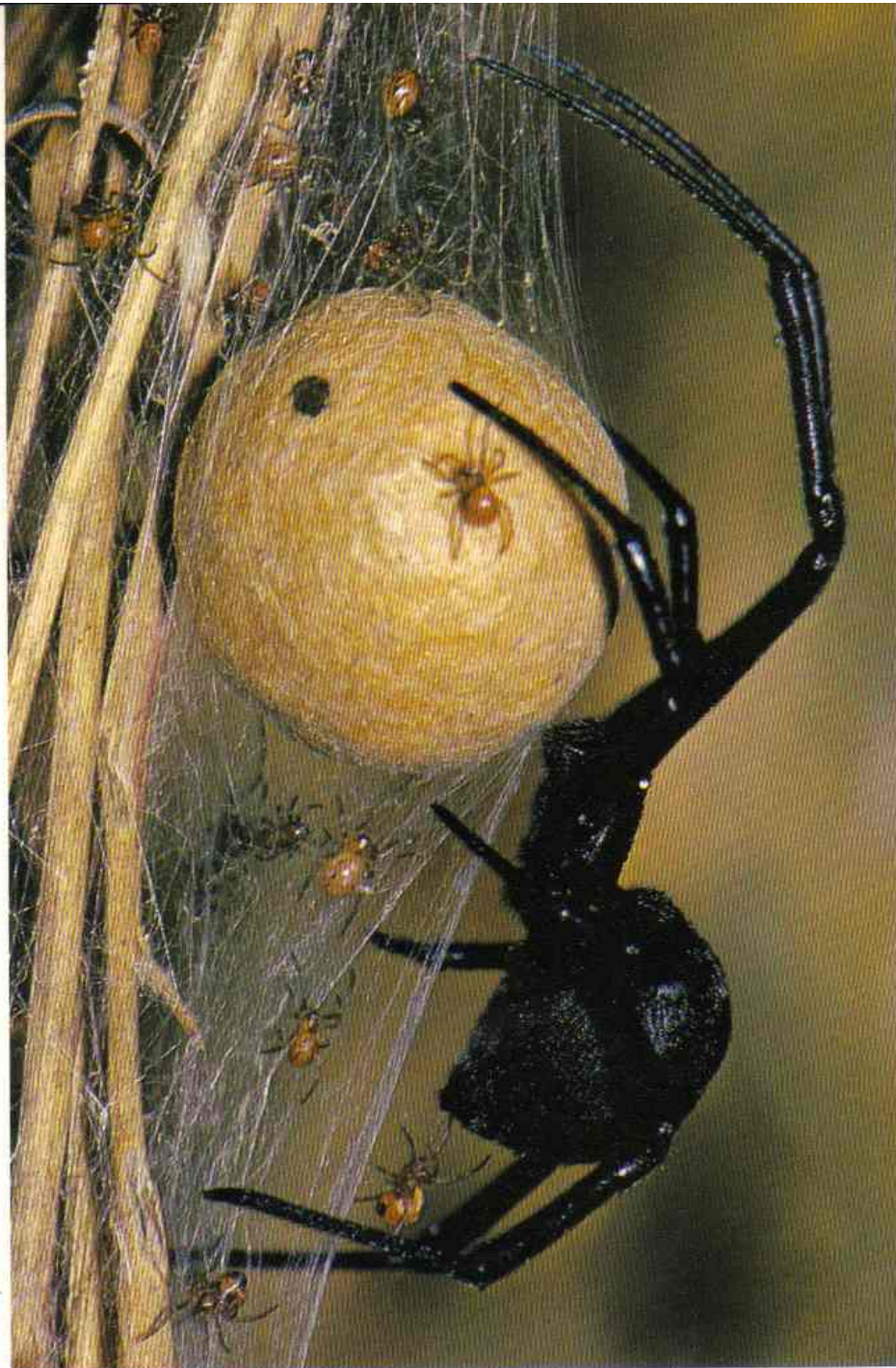
**Black widows eat insects like this cricket ◀. But if the tiny male isn't careful, he may be a meal instead of a mate! ▶**











Photos by Robert W. Mitchell/Animals Animals, Edward S. Ross

When Natasha is ready to lay her eggs she builds a nursery. First she weaves a silken sheet and lays her eggs on it. Then she covers them with a second layer of silk. The two sheets form a protective sac, or cocoon, for her eggs. The cocoon is about the size of a pea. Carefully she places it in the center of her web.

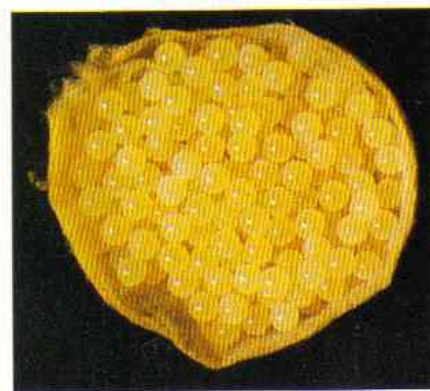
The eggs hatch within six weeks. Soon hundreds of spiderlings scatter over her web. Few of the tiny offspring will survive, for spiders are cannibals. Different kinds of spiders eat each other. Baby spiders may be eaten by spiders larger than they are. Even a mother spider sometimes eats her young!

The black widow spider's worst enemy may be the ichneumon (ik-NEW-mon) wasp. The wasp larvae eat the eggs of the black widow.

The spiderlings that survive do not leave the nest right away. First they *molt*, or shed their skins, just as you might give up your outgrown jacket for a larger one.

The spiderlings climb out of the nest and make their way to the nearest fence or flower stalk. They give off strands of gossamer (GOS-uh-mer) —

**Inside a papery cocoon, black widow eggs shine like tiny pearls ▼ until hundreds of spiderlings hatch .**



fine silk threads. A puff of wind picks up the spiderlings and blows them into the air.

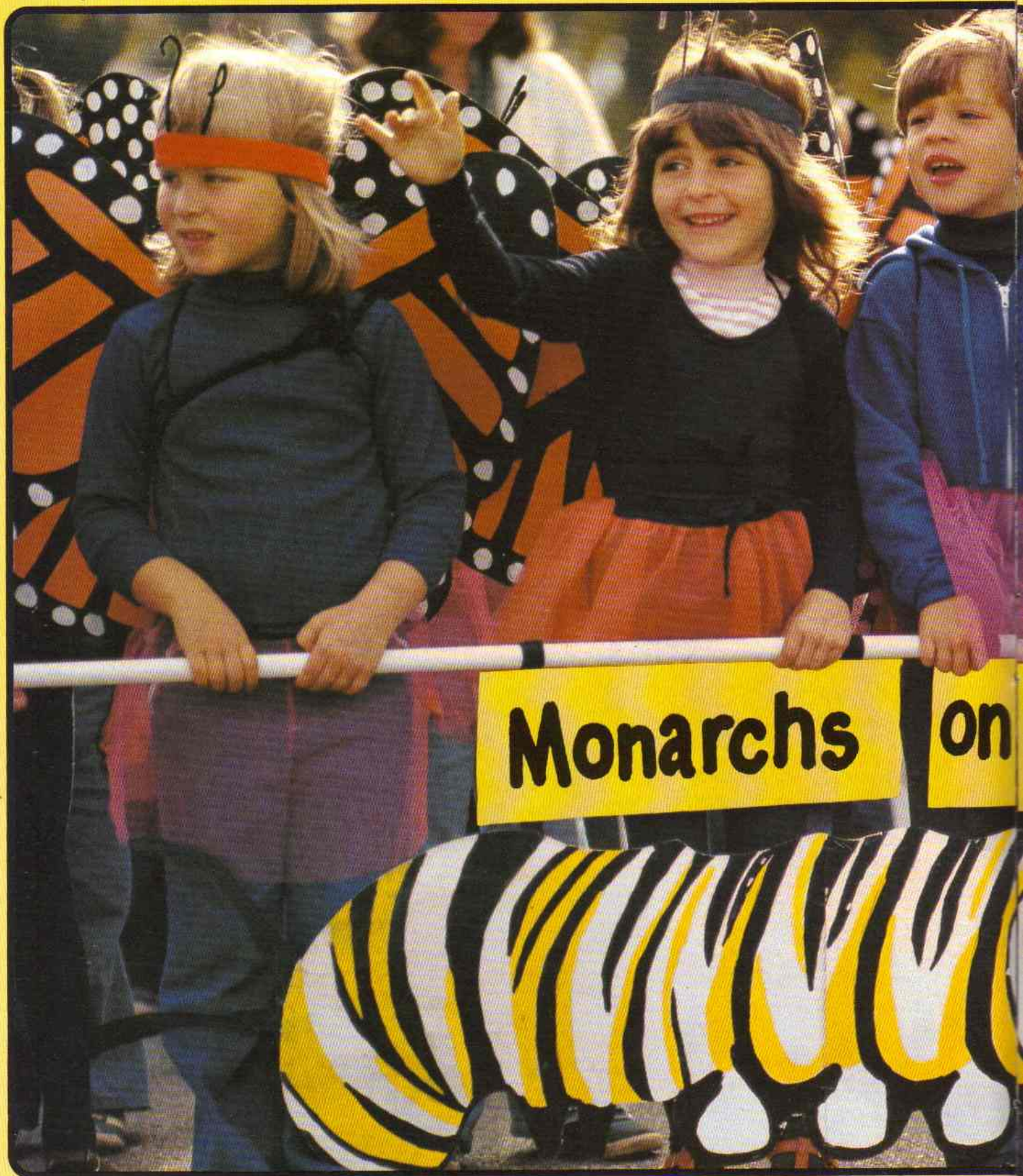
Soon the air is full of hundreds of baby black widows. Up, up and away they go, like tiny long-legged balloons. In the spring and fall you may see them ballooning through the woods and fields — off to conquer new worlds. *The End*



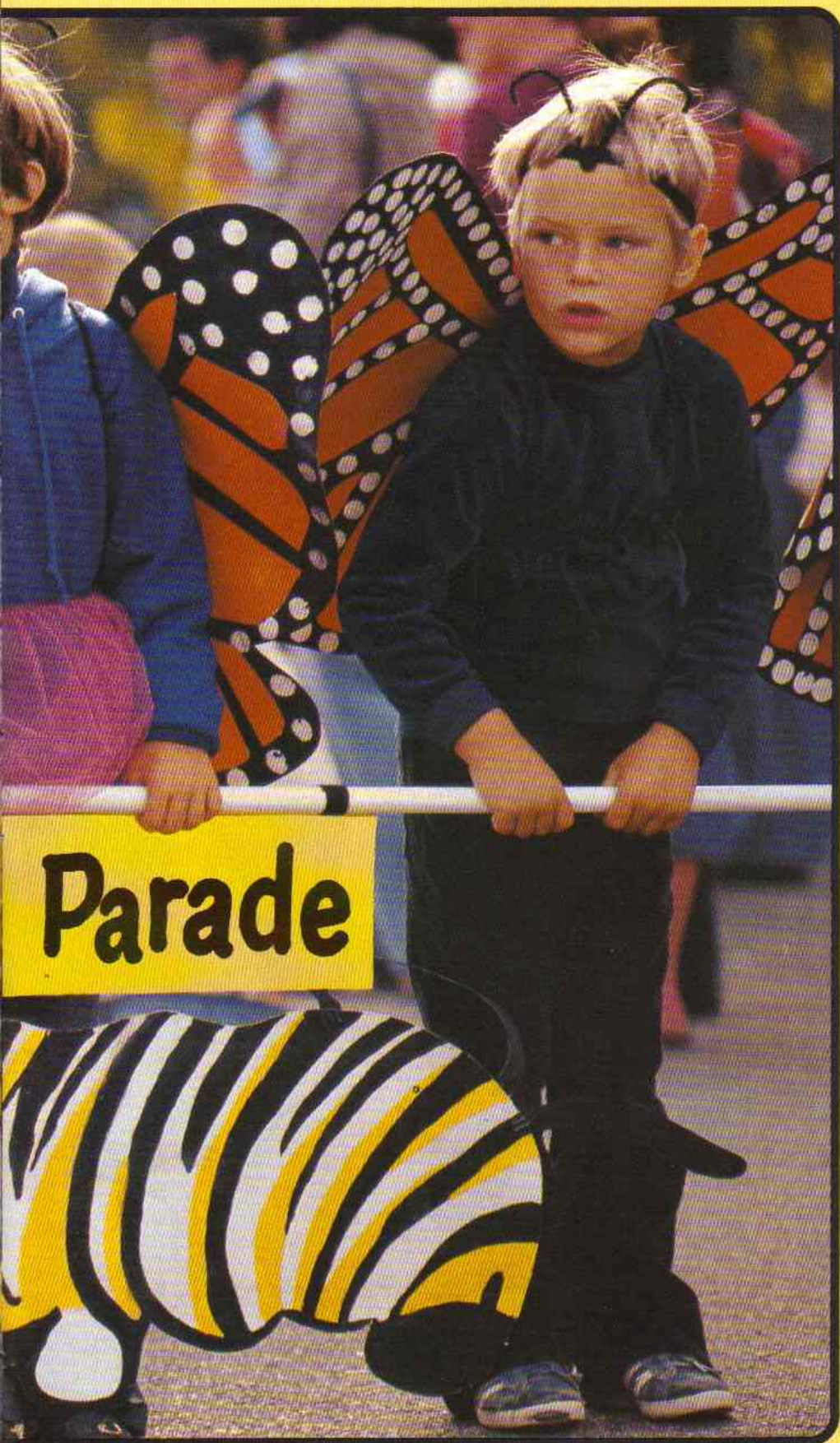
# Trick or Treat ? No, it's...











by Lee Stowell Cullen

When October comes around, I'll bet you think about the costume you'll wear to go "trick or treating." The school children in Pacific Grove, California, think about the costumes they'll wear on another special day.

Many of their costumes come in true Halloween colors—orange and black. But they won't be wearing them when witches and ghosts glide through the night on October 31st! No, in Pacific Grove they're waiting for Saturday, October 20th—the day when the town honors the monarch butterflies.

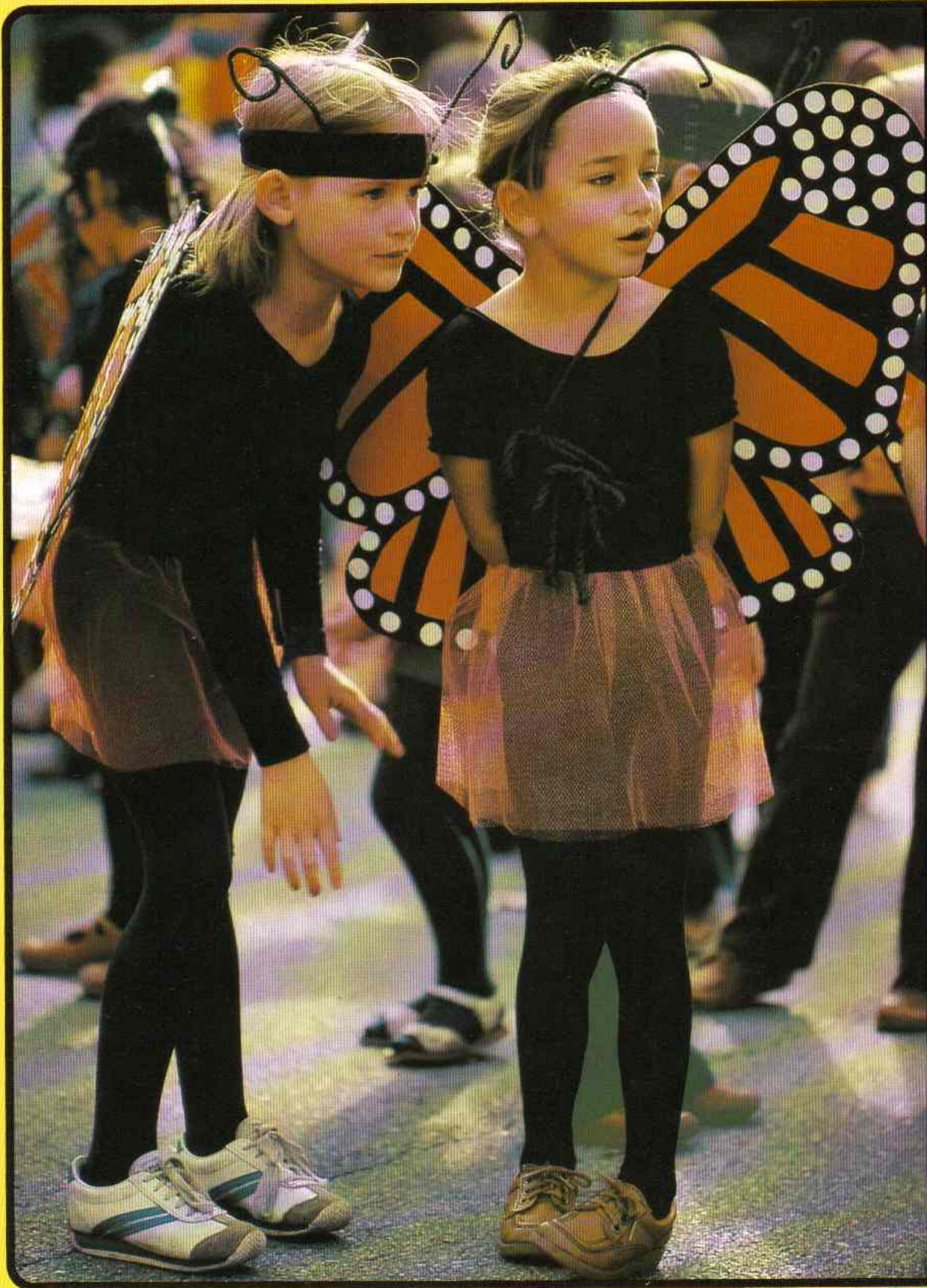
Every year, without fail, the black-and-orange beauties invade Pacific Grove. Some monarchs come from nearby. Others may fly over 1000 miles (1600 km) from the north. Together they spend the winter resting and feeding on the flowers in the town.

No one can explain how a new generation of butterflies finds its way to Pacific Grove each year. But everyone is happy to see them. Everyone loves the butterflies and the parade the school children put on to honor them.

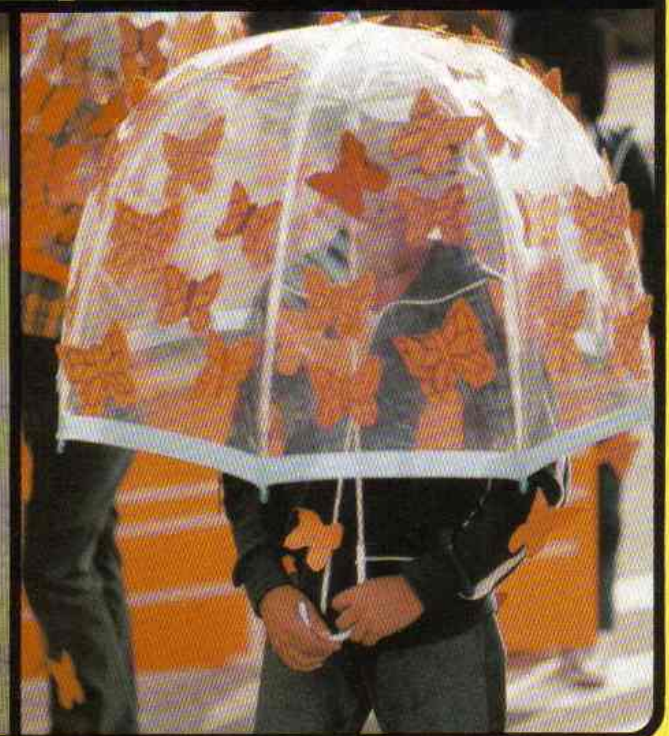
October 20, 1979, will be another great day — the 38th Annual Parade. Children will be there and so will parents, teachers and visitors. But the thousands of monarchs are the stars. No wonder Pacific Grove is called "Butterfly Town, U.S.A."

*Please turn the page*













# UNDERWATER mini-MONSTERS

by Richard Fidler

Can you make yourself small? I mean *really* small, as small as a jelly bean? It's not hard. Just shut your eyes and picture everything else getting bigger and bigger. Pretty soon you're no larger than a bean.

If you make yourself small at the edge of a pond, the pond grows into a huge lake. Suddenly pebbles become boulders! Night insects flying overhead look like prehistoric monsters. A fat moon shines in the sky and on the black water. You put on your scuba gear and fix your face mask. Holding your underwater flashlight, you dive into the chilly water.

The sound of bubbles fills your ears. You hold your breath, listening for other sounds. Stillness. The silent water streams past as you move slowly near the bottom.

You swim under a huge log which seems to make the roof for a cave. Shining your flashlight on the rotting wood, you see quick movements over your head. Hairy arms, in groups of 60 or more, hang from a tube fastened to the log. *Zip!* The arms disappear

all at once. Each clump draws into a small hole. Then, slowly, out they come again. The arms are tentacles (TEN-ta-culs) fishing for small animals in the water. This is a colony of bryozoans (bry-uh-ZOH-uns), or moss animals, waiting to catch their prey.

A waterflea, its legs kicking wildly, swims too close to one of the moss animals. Tiny hairs on the bryozoan's tentacles beat the water, creating a current. The waterflea is drawn closer and closer. Too late to escape now! The bryozoan's hairs push the waterflea into its mouth. You swim clear of these strange creatures!

Nearby a black ribbonlike animal creeps along the surface of a rock. Its crossed eyespots stare at you as it flees the bright light of your flashlight. As you turn the light away, the animal goes back to feeding. How oddly this flatworm gathers its food! A tube comes out of its belly and sucks in tiny animals living on the rock. And after it has digested its food, the wastes come out through the same tube!

Please turn the page







Suddenly out of the corner of your eye you see something move — a ghostly shape gliding through the water. It stops as your flashlight surprises it. It's a huge worm ten times your present size! Its faceless head sways to and fro in the flashlight beam. You see its three sawtoothed jaws partly hidden between two folds of skin. It's a bloodsucking leech!

All at once the leech recovers from its surprise and swims toward you. With all your might you swim into a thicket of water plants. Quickly you turn off your flashlight and hide in the darkness. To quiet the sound of your bubbles, you hold your breath so long that you think you will explode. No sounds, no movement. You are safe! You release your breath and try to swim out of the feathery growth of plants that surrounds you. But something has grabbed your leg. You can't kick free!

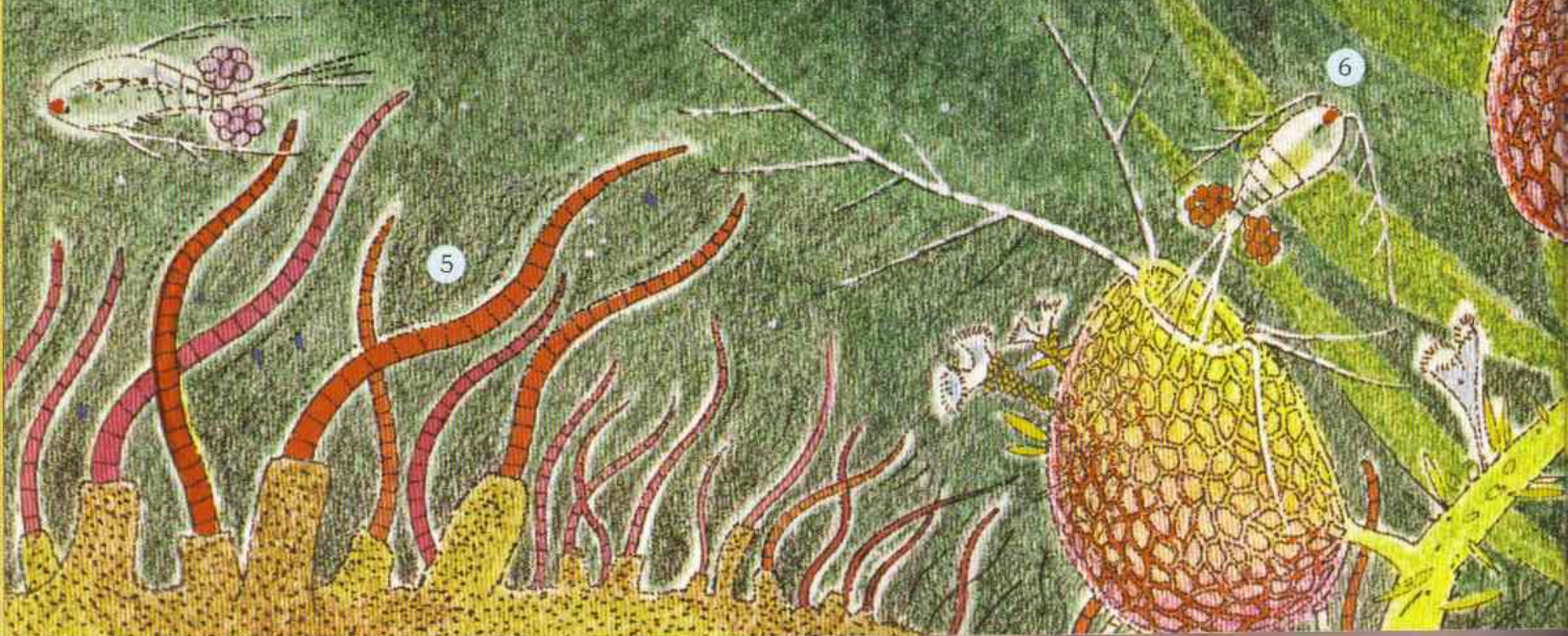
Fearing the worst, you snap on the flashlight. Oh, no! A large balloonlike sac has swallowed your right foot. You kick and kick but cannot get away. Taking out the knife you carry, you slit the sac open. You're free! Now you notice hundreds of "balloons" attached to the plants all around you. The sacs are traps attached to a bladderwort plant. Unwary animals that

touch them get caught. If you had been even smaller you would have been sucked all the way inside and digested!

Carefully avoiding the bladderwort sacs, you sink down to the bottom. Suddenly red worms appear in your light. Goodness! There are hundreds of them — long streamers of them moving back and forth. No eyes, no mouths, no faces, they wave silently in the water. Are they tentacles? Leeches? No, they are only the tails of some harmless tubifex (TOO-buh-feks) worms. Dancing and swaying, they pick up oxygen from the water. As you swim over them they vanish inside their muddy holes.

You now feel worn out from the night's adventure. You try to swim through the tangle of water plants overhead. Because your air supply is running low, you need to get to the surface soon. Your arms and legs feel heavy as you glide through the water.

Suddenly over there — behind that stick — something moves! What kind of creature is this? With its legs moving like oars, it looks like someone rowing a boat. It must be a bug called a water boatman, on its way to the surface for air. Maybe it won't mind if you hitch a ride. Quickly you grab its thorax and it pulls you up from the jungle of water plants.







- On your way up you pass other strange animals — a beautiful, flowerlike hydra, darting copepods (KOH-peh-pods) and swarms of tiny rotifers (ROE-tuh-fers). But you are too tired to study them. Breaking the surface at last, you thank the boatman for the ride and swim to shore.

Suddenly you're normal size again. Soon you'll be resting in your warm house, thinking of your great adventure with the underwater mini-monsters.


**Rangers:** Would you like to go on a real underwater adventure? All you need to do is make a waterscope (see page 39), go to a shallow pond, wade in and start exploring.

**P.R.**









# TALK TO THE OWLS

by James T. Harris

Owls are spooky creatures that few people ever see. Wouldn't it be exciting to call to these screech owls on a dark silent night . . . and have them answer you?

Believe it or not, talking with owls is easier than you think. Here's how. First you need to learn what kinds of owls live in your area. You can find out from the nearest nature center. You can also check a bird guidebook at your library to see which owls may live near you.

Next, learn what the calls of those owls sound like. One reason that an owl hoots is to warn other male owls of the same kind to stay away from its hunting and

*Please turn the page*



*Tiny elf owls nest in saguaro cacti in the Arizona desert. Screech owls ► can live almost anywhere in North America where there are tree holes.*

nesting grounds. If you can imitate the hoots, shrieks or whistles made by the owls near you, one of them will fly toward you to investigate. The owl will call to you as if you were a real owl visiting its territory!

There are two ways to learn owl calls. If you are lucky enough to hear an owl, listen carefully. Try to remember the sounds of the owl's call. At home, practice making the same sounds yourself. That way you won't scare away the owl by making the wrong kind of sounds.

You can also learn owl calls by listening to records of bird songs. (Your library may have some.) When



you think you can make the right sounds, you're ready to talk to the owls. If you have trouble making the calls, maybe you can take a tape recording with you.

It's fun to go with a group of people. Walk as quietly as you can to a likely spot. Most owls live among large trees, close to open land where hunting is good. But you may find owls anywhere from cities to deserts to prairies.

Call or play your tape several times. The calls should be loud enough to carry through the trees. If cars are passing or the wind is blowing, the owls may not hear you. And you won't be able to hear them.

Be quiet between your calls, and listen for an owl to call back. Sometimes the owls may be far away. Be patient and try again. If you don't hear anything after a few minutes, move to another place.

The *who-o-o* of the great horned owl can be heard in much of the United States. But you may hear more small owls than large ones. Small owls usually need less land for hunting, so they tend to live closer together. In many parts of North America the little screech owl lives in almost every woodland. If you're lucky, you may come across several on the same night.

*Please turn the page*





When you talk to an owl, it's best to stand under the low branches of a tree where the owl won't see you. It may come close or even land right overhead. Watch for its outline against the sky. If the moon is full, you'll be able to see the owl better.

Once you've spotted the owl, you can try for a better look by shining a flashlight at it. Some owls will glare at you and keep calling. Others will fly away into the darkness. Don't use the light until the owl is near or you will give away your hiding place.

After a while the owl will stop calling, no matter how

well you or your tape recorder can imitate its voice. Don't pester the owl, but remember where you saw it. The owl will probably answer you on another night. That will be your chance to bring other people along for a big surprise! *The End*

***DANGER! Some owls start families in January. If this horned owl thinks you're a threat, she may attack you with her sharp talons. So stay away!***





by George Zebrowski

(This is a scary story—much scarier than others in this issue. It tells about something that *might* happen far in the future. But it *won't* happen if we do everything we can to protect our world and wildlife. Imagine it is the year 2000....)

**M**ELANIE sat in her booth, ignoring the teaching machine. She closed her eyes and began dreaming of flamingos. She saw hundreds of flame-colored birds wading in a shallow lake under a clear blue sky. Their necks were long, and their beaks curved down. From the pictures she had seen in an old book, she knew their feet were webbed. But the finest thing about them was their color. All were bright pink. A few had feathers

which were red — so red, they seemed almost to be on fire. Melanie called them “firebirds.” In her daydream, some of the flamingos in the lake began to dance. Others flew high over the surrounding wilderness. Their cries filled the air.

Suddenly a buzzer went off. Melanie opened her eyes. The dream was gone. She was back in the harsh glare of the teaching booth. The green light on the panel blinked twice and the door to the booth slid open.

Melanie got up and walked out into the hall toward the elevator. No one was around, and she rode down to the first floor alone.

*Please turn the page*

## THE FIREBIRD





**H**ER MOTHER met her in the waiting room. She helped Melanie put on her smog mask and eye protector. Outside it was hard to see down the crowded street because of the thick, poisonous smog in the air.

All the way home in the street cruiser Melanie wondered when her parents would take her to the Natural Park. It was the last place in the world where wild birds still lived. Her parents had half promised to take her there during the Christmas vacation. And Melanie kept dreaming of the day when she would see real live birds instead of just those in picture books.

Melanie remembered how her father had argued with her mother about taking her to the park. He had said it wouldn't be good for a child to see what a small world of trees and animals and grass looked like if she could not live there. She would have to return to her polluted world with its crowds of people, its tall buildings and its huge parking lots. But Melanie's mother *had* promised, so her father had finally agreed.

**W**HEN the wonderful day arrived at last, Melanie could hardly believe it. She was in a helicopter on her way to the park.

The copter drifted through thick mists. Melanie sat next to her father in the passenger cabin looking out the side window. As the copter neared the landing area, it dropped below the fog. Suddenly Melanie saw the park below her — a giant carpet of green. The sun shone weakly through the clouds, but it was the brightest sun Melanie had ever seen.

The copter flew over a lake, which was silver like a mirror. Finally it put down on the grassy shore.

Melanie jumped out of the cabin as soon as the door opened and ran down to look at the lake. A gentle breeze blew through the green trees, but only a few birds were sitting in the

branches. She saw a large crow in a tree near the water's edge and a small flock of sparrows. But there were no flamingos!

She turned around and saw her father talking to the park caretaker. They weren't paying any attention to her.

**M**AYBE the firebirds were hiding. Melanie darted into the woods. Suddenly she felt free. It was as if she were on a small island in a sea of gloom. She wondered why the rest of the world could not be like this. Why did this patch of green have to be the very last of the wild places?

She looked around the woods. Maybe the flamingos were somewhere else nearby. She ran into a clearing and saw hundreds of flowers. She looked up at the sky and saw a large patch of clear blue. It was beautiful.

She heard her father calling to her from far off. She didn't want him to find her and take her back to the other, polluted world. She ran across the clearing, deeper into the woods.

Soon she came out near the other side of the lake. Here weeping willow trees trailed their branches in the lake. More flowers bloomed under them.

Suddenly Melanie stopped. A flamingo! She saw it standing perfectly still not far from the shore. It was the most beautiful bird she had ever seen, more beautiful than any in the picture books. Its feathers were almost red. Its beak was a perfect curve. The bird stood in a way that made her think it was about to take off across the lake.

**S**LOWLY Melanie moved closer to the bird. Without thinking she waded right into the water. She heard her father calling to her again, his voice closer now. She waded out to the flamingo. She was sure the bird was watching her.

She stopped in front of it. Maybe it would fly for her, this beautiful firebird. But the bird



stood perfectly still. Melanie wondered if it was afraid of her. "Oh, don't be afraid," she said. "I won't hurt you."

"Melanie, get out of there!" her father called as he came toward the lake. She turned to see him standing there with the caretaker. She turned back to the bird. She touched it, afraid she would never have the chance again.

**T**HE FLAMINGO fell over and floated in the water. Melanie bent to touch it. It felt hard and cold. It was just a plastic bird that had been stuck in the mud! Then Melanie began to cry.

On the shore the caretaker said to her father, "When the last flamingo died, we thought people ought to see what they looked like. So we put that fake one at the edge of the lake. It fools most visitors if they don't get too close to it."

"Melanie, come out!" her father ordered.

"Years and years ago we had real flamingos here," the caretaker went on. "When they lifted into the air their feathers seemed to catch fire in the sunlight. We have some old movies of them and they certainly looked beautiful. It's a shame, isn't it, that people crowded too close to the park. And the water in the lake became poisoned too, I'm told. I guess those flamingos needed more than just this little island to survive."

Melanie stopped crying. She heard everything the caretaker said. She picked up the firebird and carefully stood it up again.

"Goodbye," she whispered, and turned to go.

*The End*

**Rangers:** This was a make-believe story of Melanie's world. How old will you be in the year 2000? What do you want your world to be like then? Send your letters to Firebird, Ranger Rick, 1412 16th St. NW, Washington, DC 20036.

*R.R.*



Drawings by Carol Smith



# Nature CLUB News

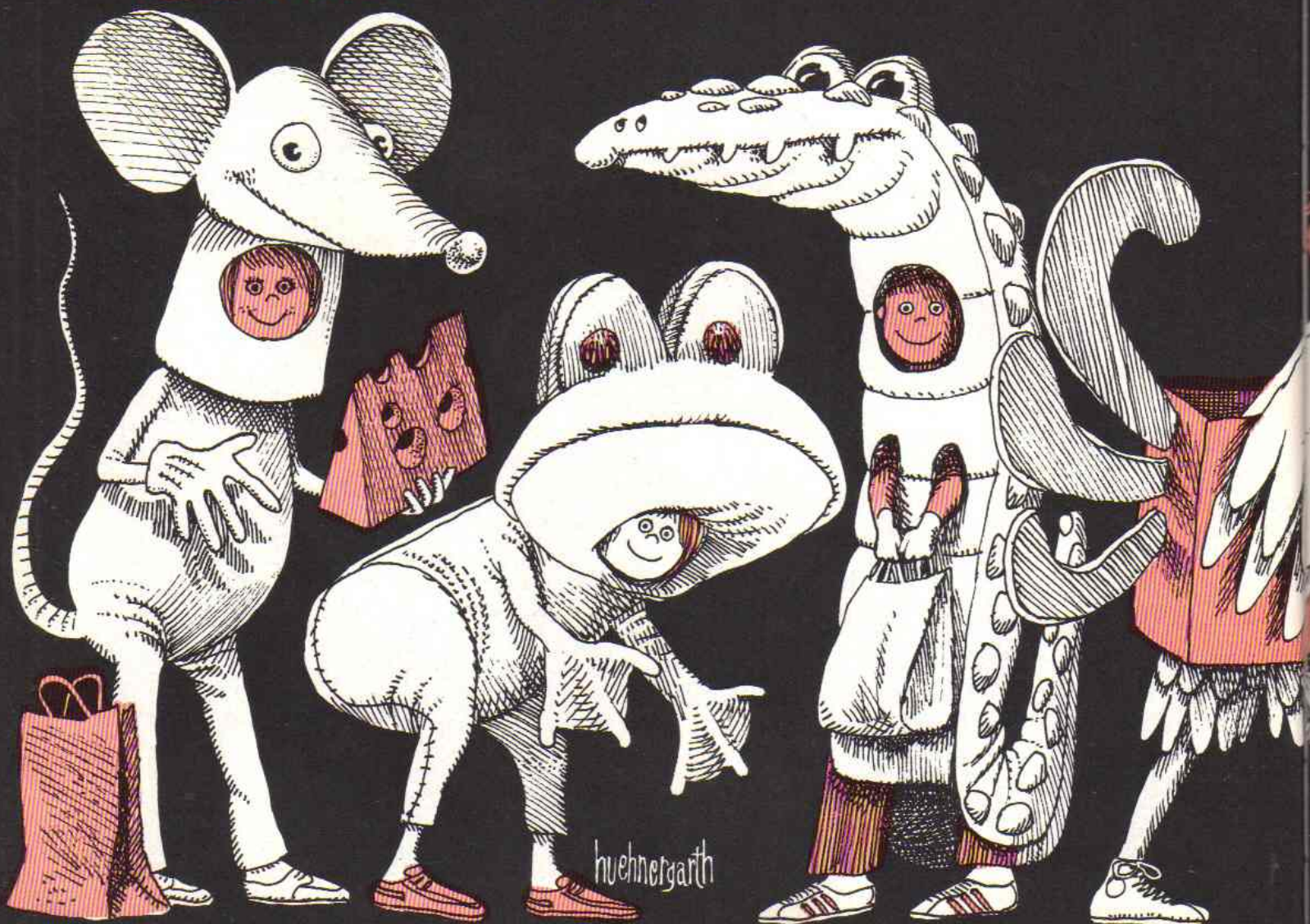
## TRICK OR TREAT WITH WILDLIFE

This year your Ranger Rick Nature Club can plan a *wildlife* Halloween. Use your meetings from now through October to plan a theme and make your costumes. The whole club could dress up as scary animals — wildlife from your area, endangered species or any other form of wildlife that is of special interest to nature club members.

At your next club meeting do some research on the

animals your club has chosen. You can get information from books you bring in from home or from your local or school library . . . and, of course, old issues of *Ranger Rick*!

Each club member can choose a fact of special interest about the animal he or she will represent. Does that animal have an unusual trick it uses to help it survive? Does it have an odd nesting habit? What is it about that animal that interests *you* the most?





Now that you know *everything* about these animals, including what they look like, it's time to make your costume. Bring to your next meeting all materials you think you'll need. And don't forget needles, thread, scissors and glue. This is a good chance for you to recycle all kinds of things to make animal ears or fur or faces or tails. Use your adult leader's Activity Guide for suggestions and directions for making animal costumes.

Now it's time to Trick or Treat with Wildlife! Share this special Halloween idea with your neighbors and classmates. Trick or treat in your neighborhood as a club. Ring the bell and say, "Happy Wildlife Halloween! We'd like to tell you something about these scary animals," or "about these animals that live in our area." Each club member then shares his or her special piece of information. Perhaps you'll want to start, "I am a bat and I sleep

hanging upside down." Or, "Did you know that I live in this area too, but maybe you haven't noticed me because . . ."

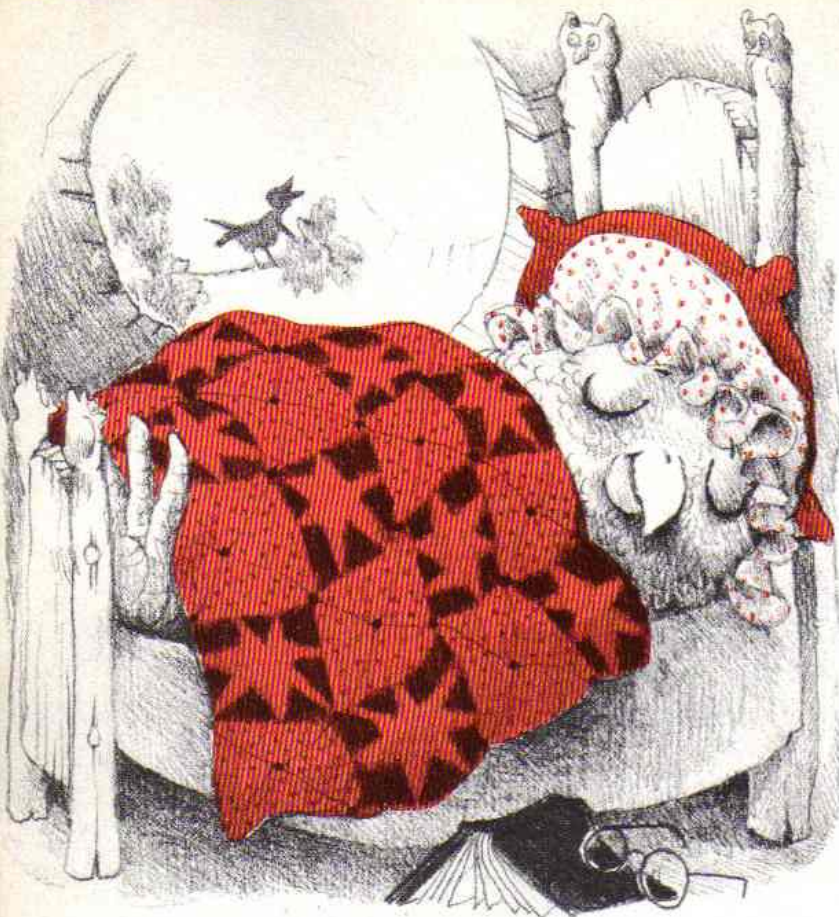
Class clubs can go from room to room sharing their Wildlife Halloween with schoolmates.

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Tell us what theme your club planned and let us see a picture of your costumes. Write to Wildlife Halloween, Ranger Rick's Nature Club, 1412 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20036.







# WHO-O-O KNOWS?

With Halloween coming, I've been getting lots of questions about owls. It's not surprising. After all, owls are fascinating.

Dear Wise Old Owl:

**Why do owls sleep in the day and not at night?**

Christine Roam, Age 11, Indiana, PA

Most owls hunt at night because small mammals, such as mice and rats, come out after dark.

Owls are well equipped for night hunting. They can see very well. Their ears are so sensitive that they can easily hear a mouse running across the ground. And their feathers are so velvety that there is hardly a sound as they swoop out of the dark to grab their prey.

## Do owls eat anything besides meat?

Allen White, Age 12, Corte Madera, CA

Owls are almost entirely meat eaters, or *carnivores* (CAR-nuh-vores). The larger owls eat squirrels and rabbits, and the smaller ones eat mice and shrews. Some owls catch birds or insects. And there are even a few that go fishing!

Owls often swallow their prey whole. Later they burp up the hard parts in a dry pellet. The pellets are neat little packages of fur, scales, feathers and bones.

Personally, I'm not too fond of mice, and I'm much too polite to burp in public.

## We've been hearing an owl that *whoos* in the daytime. All of our family is puzzled. What do you think about this?

Jonathan Witmer, Dalmatia, PA

Some owls call during the day. Great horned owls say *who who who-hoo whoo*. Barred owls seem to say *who cooks for you, who cooks for you all?*

Even though most owls are active at night, they can see just as well in daylight. A few, such as short-eared and burrowing owls, are even daytime hunters.

## I live on a farm. We have a problem. We have lots of owls. If we do not do something about them we will have some dead chickens.

Aaron Schumacher, Lowden, WA

Owls aren't a problem, Aaron. They're really good news. The only owl that catches chickens is the great horned owl, and it more than makes up for that by catching all sorts of pesky rabbits, mice and rats. In fact, owls eat so many pests you should be glad to have them on your farm. And aren't you glad you have me to answer your questions? W.O.O.

Answers to *Scary Skulls*, page 9:

1. monkey; 2. beaver; 3. rabbit;
4. bobcat.







# SNEAK A PEEK AT mini- MONSTERS

Want to see some real mini-monsters? Just make this waterscope, push the end underwater and start looking! You'll need:

Half-gallon milk carton, Scissors, Heavy rubber bands, Clear plastic food wrap or bag.

1. Cut the top and bottom from the milk carton.
2. Stretch a piece of plastic wrap over the bottom rim or put the carton in the plastic bag. (Tuck the bag's top inside the carton. Tape down.)
3. Hold the plastic or bag in place with rubber bands.

If you have a small magnifying lens, lay it in the bottom of the waterscope. With this you can see some of the very tiny creatures shown on pages 24 to 27.



by Aileen Fisher

"It's cold," said the cricket,  
"my fingers are numb.  
I scarcely can fiddle,  
I scarcely can strum.  
And oh, I'm so sleepy,  
now summer has gone."  
He dropped his fiddle  
to stifle a yawn.

"Don't," said the field mouse,  
"act so sober. You can't stop yet,  
when it's still October."

"I've played," said the cricket,  
"for weeks and weeks.  
My fiddle needs fixing,  
it's full of squeaks.  
My fingers need resting."  
He yawned, "Ho, hum . . .  
I'm quite (yawn) ready . . .  
for winter to come.  
I've found me the coziest . . .  
doziest . . . house . . ."

## **HALLOWEEN, HALLOWEEN!**



"You can't stop *now*," said the mouse in sorrow,  
"you can't stop fiddling until tomorrow.  
Tune up your fiddle for one last scene . . .  
have you forgotten it's Halloween?"

"What!" cried the cricket.  
He yawned no more!  
"You should have mentioned  
the fact before.  
Is everyone ready?  
And where's the score?  
What in the world  
are we waiting for?"  
The cricket fiddled,  
the field mouse squeaked,  
the dry weeds twiddled,  
the bare twigs tweaked,

the hoot owl hooted,  
the cornstalks strummed,  
the west wind tooted,  
the fence wires hummed:  
Oh, what a concert,  
all night long!  
The fiddle was shrill,  
and the wind was strong:  
"Halloween, Halloween,  
crick, crack, creak.  
Halloween, Halloween,  
scritch, scratch, squeak."



Drawing by Cindy Szekeres

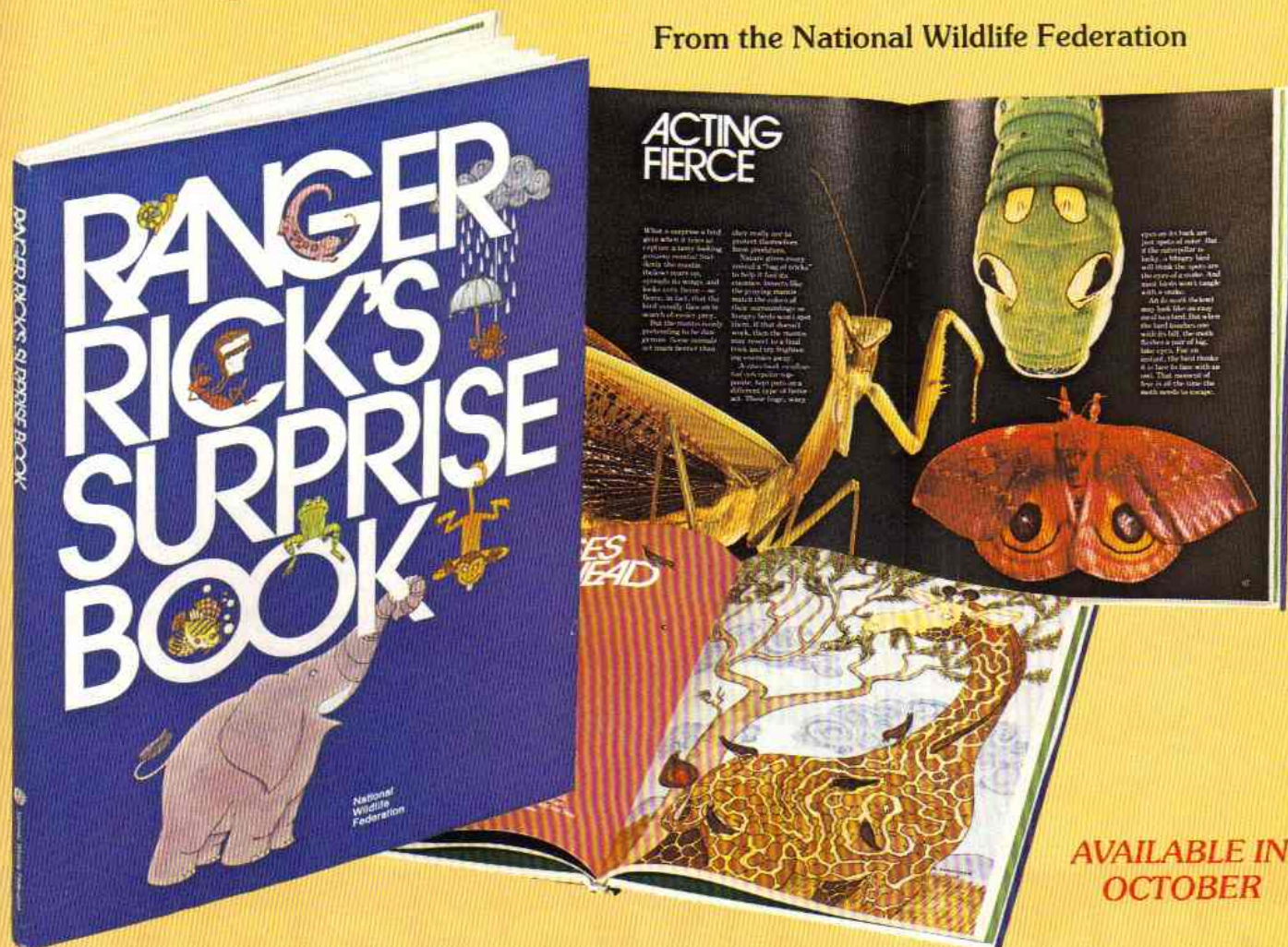
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# RANGER RICK'S SURPRISE BOOK

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From the National Wildlife Federation



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THE SURPRISE BOOK helps you to discover which animals have built-in camouflage, what color dinosaurs were in the prehistoric times, what kind of animal the unicorn really was. Which are the biggest creatures in the world? Do "flying" frogs really fly? And what is the weird-looking animal called "The Stuck-Together Beast"? Plus, there are so many more fantastic stories and guessing games to keep you entertained.

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To order Ranger Rick's Surprise Book, use order form on page 40A.





# PUMPKIN PEOPLE

Story and photos by David Cavagnaro

**In the spring** my son, Pippin, helped plant pumpkins.

"Pointed end down," I showed him, handing him the seeds. "That's where the roots will come out."

Seeds are among the most magical things in the world. Each one is a package from which will grow a special kind of plant. As we planted we did not know that we were planting more than the seeds of squash and pumpkins. We were also planting the seeds of an adventure!

Summer days passed quickly in the garden. Each day the pumpkin vines grew longer. Their bright orange blossoms were open every morning. Our bees would get pollen and nectar from them.

**Gradually the nights grew colder** and the days shorter. The corn stalks began to dry and the grape leaves turned brilliant yellow and red.

One day Pippin and Maggie, his mother, came with me to the pumpkin patch. The vines were beginning to die.



Soon the crop would be ready. We knew the time had come for a Halloween celebration. We set a date and invited our friends to the farm.

**On the morning of the big day,** Pippin helped me gather the pumpkins. Maggie made the house smell delicious as she prepared the food. We used gourds, Indian corn and autumn flowers for decorations. Pippin and I sorted the squash and pumpkins to be carved.

When our friends arrived everyone joined in carving jack-o'-lanterns. After most of the pumpkins had been given faces, we gathered scraps of wood and built small boats. Some were just large enough to carry a single jack-o'-lantern. Others were so big there was enough space for several pumpkin passengers. Pippin and his friends were especially fond of boats; they even built masts on them and rigged them with sails.

There was a lot of laughter as each pumpkin got its face. Some of the jack-

o'-lanterns were long and skinny; others were round and fat. Some were green, some yellow, others orange. Each carver had given his pumpkin its own special personality.

After the sun went down we gathered all the carved pumpkin people together. We put half of them in the boats and arranged the rest on tables and benches near the house. We put a candle inside each one. The pumpkins looked like strange garden folk who had come to watch the fun.

**As dusk approached,** bats left their hiding places in the barn. We could see their dark forms against the sky. The time had come to launch the pumpkins.

We took the jack-o'-lanterns and their boats to the shore of the lagoon in front of our house. The evening was cool and crystal clear. A thin crescent moon began to rise in the darkening sky.

The tide was going out and the water flowed gently on its way back to the sea.

*Please turn the page*













One by one the candles were lit. Then the pumpkins were put in their boats and set adrift. Soon there was a long string of boats floating off into the darkness. The glowing passengers stared back at us in silent farewell. Finally we lost sight of them in the distance. We wondered what adventures they might have.

**We walked quietly back to the house.**

A great horned owl flew to the top of an alder tree. Its soft hooting drifted across the yard. We fell silent and listened.

After several moments we gathered around the rest of the pumpkins. Some of us struck matches and lit the candles one by one. Carefully we put the lids in place. We stood back and looked at them. All the pumpkin people had come alive.

Softly a friend said, "I have the strangest feeling I've seen them all before."

In a way it was like looking in a mirror — as if our own faces stared back at us . . . laughing, crying, teasing, joking. In the silent darkness where only the owl called, we looked at the pumpkin people and saw ourselves.

We watched for a while, then ate dinner. After the dishes were done our friends said good night and left for home. Pippin and I cleaned some of the largest pumpkin seeds. They would be used for roasting. The rest of the scraps went on the compost pile in the garden.

The next morning dawned cloudy. By evening the first big Pacific storm of winter blew in. The wind raged. Heavy rain pounded against the windows all night. We could hear the surf roaring in the lagoon.

**When the storm was over,** Maggie, Pippin and I walked down to the shore of the lagoon to see what the weather had done. To our great surprise we found a

pumpkin staring up at us from the rocky shore. Shipwrecked and battered though it was, it still smiled as if it had really enjoyed its adventure.

As we walked along the shore we found more pumpkins cast up on the rocks. Their faces were draped crazily with seaweed. The pumpkin voyagers had come home. We found their boats too. Some were still intact, but most had broken to bits where the storm had smashed them against the rocks.

We carried the pumpkin people back to the farm and put them on the compost heap. They, too, would rot and return to the soil.

**One day some weeks later,** I took a bucket of kitchen scraps out to the compost pile. I saw something I could hardly believe! I ran back to the house to get Pippin and Maggie.

"They're still alive!" I shouted. "The pumpkin people are alive!"

The faces were there just as we had left them, saints and devils all heaped together. But their expressions had changed. Each pumpkin had softened and withered. Some had grown mellow, some looked fierce. Some had even kept their wrinkled smiles. To some of them, old age had come at last.

**Then one day,** as the last life seemed to be leaving the pumpkins, Pippin discovered a wonderful thing.

"Our pumpkin people are coming back!" he shouted, running to the house from the garden. "Come see!"

From the eye of one wise and happy-looking face a pumpkin seed had sprouted. Another wonderful story of the pumpkins was beginning. *The End*

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